DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 248 829 IR 011 278

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TITLE Leisure and Functional Reasons for Subscribing to Cable Television.
PUB DATE May 84
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association (San Francisco, CA, May 1984).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Cable Television; *Leisure Time; *Mass Media; Programing (Broadcast); *Purchasing; *Recreational Activities; Television Research; *Television Viewing; Use Studies

ABSTRACT

To investigate the integration of new communications technology into existing patterns of leisure, a functional research model must be combined with a paradigm based on leisure time and the economical use of such time. A survey of 273 Davis, California, residents investigated the relationship between the desire to subscribe to cable television (CATV) and time utilization, leisure activities, utility and uses of television, and perceived advantages and disadvantages of television. Forty-one percent of the respondents indicated that they would subscribe to CATV once it was offered. CATV was considered an addition to current outside activities and not necessarily as a substitute for them. Heavy users of overall media were less likely to subscribe than those who were not. Heavy users of broadcast media (television and radio) were not more likely to subscribe than light users, and heavy users of print media were less likely to subscribe. Although economy of leisure per se appears to have little relationship to cable television subscription, economy and the perceived function of media use does appear related. Footnotes cite 14 references. (LMM)

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LEISURE AND FUNCTIONAL REASONS FOR SUBSCRIBING TO CABLE TELEVISION

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Paper presented at The International Communication Association, in May 1984, San Francisco.

IR011278

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LEISURE AND FUNCTIONAL
REASONS FOR SUBSCRIBING TO CABLE TELEVISION

The adoption of new communications technology can be explained in many different ways. Theorists operating from a functional model argue for a utilitarian set of reasons: people judge how the new technology will be useful to them in terms of some inner psychological or cognitive needs or in terms of real world practicalities. The functional approach has led to many insights into the role played by technological innovations, but there are some questions which a functional approach alone may not resolve. One such question involves the way people integrate new communications technology into their existing pattern of leisure. To explore this question one must combine a functional approach with a paradigm based on leisure time and the economical use of such time.

The leisure time model operates on the principle of scarcity [1]. Since there is only so much time in any given day, people must choose what to do with that portion that is not taken up by their regular routine. The introduction of a new communication technology is one more potential option for how to spend one's leisure hours, but how can the new technology be made to "fit" into current life-style patterns? Of primary interest to the authors is a question arising out of this necessity for choice: do new communication systems simply substitute for existing leisure time activities (thereby displacing them from the individual's daily regimen), or do such innovations become appendages of the old system, additions which do not supplant the old, but merely modify and extend them?

Cable television is one technological advance whose precise effect on the individual's communication environment we do not yet understand. This is especially troublesome inasmuch as cable television has reached about 40 percent of U.S. homes [2] and has already become an important part of society [3].

Past research into cable has assessed self-reported changes in media activity after people subscribe to cable television, explored the demographics of cable subscribers, examined programming, interest maximization, various policy issues, and market penetration [4]. This report contributes to these other studies by examing the reasons for subscribing to cable television (CATV), with special attention to the relationship between functional reasons and life-style factors. A telephone survey of time utilization, leisure activities, utility and uses of television, and perceived advantages of cable television will be reported in relation to the desire to subscribe to CATV.

From an economy of time perspective, people's overall use of the day is both divisible and finite. An adult's out-of-work life consists of personal maintenance, eating and sleep. But it also contains "free" or leisure time. The dominant leisure activity for most people is watching television, though such use varies from person to person. The average adult views television almost three hours a day, and rates it second only to the family as the most personally satisfying and enjoyable activity [5]. Recent lifestyle trends--reflected, for example, in movements toward better nutrition and physical fitness--have taken people out of the home, resulting in a decrease for some in television viewing [6]. People who are active outside the home may not have time to fit television into their lifestyle, whereas people who are less active outside the home or who are social isolates will most likely use TV more as a source of leisure. Thus, we argue that people who are highly active outside the home will not perceive cable television as a substitute for those existing outside activities. H1: Substantial activity outside the home will inhibit the desire to subscribe to cable television.

For those individuals who are inactive, however, overall media use should be a predictor of the desire to subscribe to CATV, if only for the reason that

such subscription would increase the amount and variety of options. Yet some research has implied that certain forms of media function as competing sources and therefore tend to inhibit rather than promote people's desire for CATV. Kaplan's [7] two findings are relevant to this point. First, he found that people reported reductions in their use of radio news and local broadcast channels after subscribing to CATV. This suggests substitution of CATV for other media forms (presumably because people see CATV as a better or more complete source of information) rather than an additive effect whereby subscribers increase their overall consumption of media after getting CATV. Conversely, Kaplan's second finding was that print media consumption did not decline for those who chose to subscribe, indicating that CATV may not substitute for print use. If there is no substitution incentive for subscribing, print media users may then see CATV subscription as an "extra." In line with these arguments, we hypothesize: H2: People who are heavy users of general media are more likely to subscribe to cable television than those who are light users; $H2_1$: People who are heavy users of broadcast media are more likely to subscribe than light users; $H2_2$: People who are heavy users of print media are less likely to subscribe to cable television than those who are light users.

From a functional perspective[8], it is evident that the uses or utilities people attribute to broadcast television also apply to CATV use. Becker's research into media forms found that people tend to engage in the same gratification seeking behaviors from one medium to another[9]. If CATV promises to gratify existing utilities or to add more functions for media use, then it seems reasonable that subscription should result. When the opportunity to subscribe to CATV becomes available, people may make an active assessment of the projected uses for the new technology. One example would be CATV's most widely heralded advantage--expanded program selection. In most systems both entertainment and news

selection is greatly expanded, but precisely how certian utilities fit into this expanded schedule is not yet know[10]. Certainly those who use broadcast television to be entertained, to relax, or to pass the time would have even more opportunities to do so by acquiring this new technology. On the other hand, those who want to be informed, find out about local, state, national and international news would also have expanded opportunities by subscribing to CATV. Thus, we offer an exploratory research question: Which utilities are significant predictors of CATV subscription? We advance this question knowing quite well that CATV may apply to all utilities.

The last set of variables to be examined are those which emerge from traditional adoption literature: perceived advantages/disadvantages for subscribing[11]. Generally, H3: People who perceive more advantages of CATV will be more likely to subscribe than those who do not. The precise reasons for adoption (subscription) are, however, unknown. Kaplan[12] considered convenience, completeness, uniqueness, and the ability to preview as major factors in people's substitution of CATV news channels for other informational broadcast media. These four factors are also expected to be advantages cited by potential subscribers for getting CATV.

People might subscribe, for instance, because CATV is available at all hours--a convenience consideration. Completeness might refer to the perceived variety and extent of programming. Uniqueness might be a factor if people recognize that CATV offers programming that is infrequently available on broadcast TV: specials, children's programs, R-rated films, and so forth. Kaplan also considered previewing, a process whereby a person watches the headlines on a cable (news) channel prior to seeking details elsewhere, as a potential predictor of adoption. To clarify the subscription process, we will explore these reasons for adoption and assess their relationship to CATV subscription. To improve on Kaplan's technique, we asked respondents to generate their own advantages and disadvantages.

METHODS

A random sample of 273 Davis, California residents were phone surveyed by trained communication majors [13]. In order to get approximately the same number of female as male respondents, interviewers asked for the opposite sex on every other call. With this procedure, the final demography included 130 female and 143 male completed questionnaires.

Variables

Subscription. After explaining that the city was planning to install a cable system, respondents were asked "When Davis gets its cable system, do you think you'll subscribe?" If respondents said they didn't know, they were prompted to indicate which way they were leaning, and then coded as "Yes" or "No."

Outside Leisure Activity. This was a summed index of items which measured attendance at movies, concerts, and sporting events; visits to nightclubs, cocktail lounges, or dinner evenings; visits with friends and party attendance; going to meetings and church functions; and engaging in outside sports. Activity was assessed in terms of frequency over a month. Responses were coded in four categories with never, once, twice, three, and four or more times for each item.

Media Use. Overall media use was a summed index of total broadcast and print use. Broadcast use assessed the number of daily hours spent listening to radio summed with the number of hours spent watching television. Print use included daily hours reading local papers, out-of-town papers, newsmagazines, popular magazines, and books. In order to complete chi-square analyses, respondents were coded as heavy or light users by splitting the scale at the mean.

Functional Utilities. Respondents were asked to indicate how often they watched television--"All the time," "Most of the time," "Sometimes," or "Not ever,"--to be entertained, relax, pass the time, to learn, and to find out about

international events, state and national events, and local events and people.

Advantages. Since little is known about people's perceptions of cable, a self-generated, open-ended question asking respondents to list the perceived advantages and disadvantages of cable was used.

In order to report support for hypotheses, the .05 level of significance was required.

RESULTS

Forty-one percent of the respondents stated they would subscribe to cable television once offered. Even though 14% had a rotor antenna with the capacity to receive stations outside the immediate channel market, the subscription choice was not related to the ability to receive channels ($x^2=2.57$, df=1, $p>.11$).

Hypothesis one predicted that substantial activity outside the home would inhibit adoption tendencies. This hypothesis was not supported ($x^2=0.65$, df=3, $p>.72$). Apparently, cable is "fit" into people's lives regardless of general outside activity. Subanalysis of this relationship, by correlating the amount of specific outside activity with subscription was completed. Attendance at movies was significantly related to subscription ($r=0.10$, $p<.05$) even though other activities were not. How many times the respondents reported going to see a play or concert ($r=0.05$, $p>.19$), attending a nightclub, cocktail lounge or had dinner out ($r=-0.01$, $p>.45$), visiting with friends or attending a party ($r=-0.01$, $p>.46$), attending meetings or church functions ($r=0.01$, $p>.41$) or engaging in an outside sport ($r=-.08$, $p>.10$) were not significantly associated with subscription of CATV.

The second hypothesis reasoned that overall media use (print, broadcast, movies) was likely to contribute to subscription, with those who were high media fans or users to be more likely to subscribe than those who were not heavy media

users. As Table 1 shows, the people who are heavy users of media are less likely to subscribe than those who are not (x^2=4.42, df=1, $p<.05$).

TABLE ONE ABOUT HERE

The corollary hypothesis (Table 1) predicting that people who are heavy users of broadcast media (television and radio) would be more likely to subscribe than light users was not supported, although the third hypothesis predicting that heavy users of print media would be less likely to subscribe than light viewers was supported (x^2=7.80, df=1, $p<.006$).

The analysis of utilities for viewing television and their relationship to subscription were then completed. Using television for entertainment (x^2=9.29, df=1, $p<.05$) and relaxation (x^2=10.09, df=1, $p<.05$) were related to subscription, but to pass the time was not significantly related (x^2=5.23, df=1, $p>.27$).

To learn was also a utility related to subscribing (x^2-10.02, df=1, $p<.05$). Specific use of television as an information source indicated that although use of television to find out about State and National events (x^2=2.03, df=1, $p>.57$) and International events (x^2=1.36, df=1, $p>.72$) was not significantly associated with subscribing to CATV, to find out about local events was significantly associated with willingness to subscribe to CATV (x^2=15.18, df=1, $p<.002$).

The final set of examined variables were the respondent generated advantages and disadvantages of cable television (see Table 2). The most commonly listed advantages for subscribing were (in decending popularity): wider selection (52% listed it), to get movies (21%), better programs (19%), improved reception (13%), no commercials (10%), sports (8%), educational programs (5%), local programming, news, and cheap entertainment (each 4%), and children's programs and interactive uses (each less than 1%). Only 7% of the respondents did not list an advantage, whereas 25% did not list a disadvantage.

Listed disadvantages were cost (35%), watch too much TV (14%), objectionable programming (7%), time would be better spent elsewhere (5%), poor programming (5%), inability to control children's viewing (3%), repetitious programming (2%) and won't read as often (less than1%). Where cell size was applicable, an analysis of the relationship between listing an advantage and subscription was conducted. Analyses indicated that none of the listed reasons were associated strongly enough to preclude or lead to subscription of CATV. However, the sheer number of advantages listed was associated with desire to subscribe ($r=0.16$, $p<.05$).

Kaplan's substitution category of completeness-represented in this self-generated procedure by sports, educational programming, cheap entertainment, wider selection, and local programming--was selected most often as an adoption category (78%). Uniqueness--represented by better programs, to get movies, no commercials, and interactive uses--was the second most frequently generated category (50%). Improved reception was considered to fall under Kaplan's category of availability. Respondents did not list preview characteristics as a reason for subscribing.

DISCUSSION

Hypotheses were developed from functional and economy of leisure perspectives. A summary of the results with discussion of each of these perspectives, beginning with economy of leisure, follows.

Economy of Leisure. This perspective lead to predictions that people would have to fit the innovation of cable television into their finite lifestyle time. The study explored substitution of activities outside the house and media use activities for cable television.

For those outside activities such as playing sports, attending concerts, going to parties, etc., the desire to subscribe was not significantly related to the amount

of activity. While not inhibiting the desire to subscribe, this finding supports the idea that people generally consider cable television as an addition to their current outside activities and not necessarily as a substitute for them. The exception to this finding is movie theatre attendance: respondents who regularly attend movie theaters indicated a strong desire to subscribe, perhaps expecting the new technology to substitute for the old form of leisure. One fifth of the respondents listed getting movies as an advantage for subscribing to cable television, adding support to the idea that CATV may substitute for movie theater attendance.

The above findings do not necessarily refute Robinson's hypothesis predicting that television would substitute for leisure. It may be the case either that people do not see cable television as leisure or that they do not recognize CATV subscription as a leisure substitution during the adoption decision process (even though after getting CATV it may in fact influence actual leisure behavior).

Within the same economy of time perspective, media activities were examined. We expected that heavy media use would be positively correlated with desire to subscribe, but the results indicated the reverse. Respondents who were heavy users of overall media were less likely to subscribe than those who were not. Perhaps people appraise CATV as an unsubstantial improvement on the available media sources. They may even think they already have enough access to media and need no more. These possibilities point to the importance of understanding how media functions in terms of particular utilities such as those reported below.

Heavier users of print media were, as expected, less likely to desire subscription than light users. This finding reinforces the rationale suggested in the previous paragraph but also reestablishes that print media probably do not substitute for video forms (e.g., broadcast or cable television). In addition, the current finding when considered with Kaplan's previous finding of no change

in print media use after cable subscription, lends further credence to a general nonsubstitution hypothesis. The results showing no significant relationship between use of standard broadcast television and the desire to subscribe to CATV also supports this rationale.

Functions. The perceived functions and uses of media were expected to be related to desire to subscribe to CATV, even though no specific utilities were hypothesized.

Exploratory analyses resulted in evidence that using television for entertainment and relaxation related to the desire to subscribe. Respondents gave high priority to advantages that fit this utility by listing "to get movies," wider selection, and better programming as the top three advantages for subscribing to CATV.

To learn was also related to the desire to subscribe, even though informational programming such as educational shows and news were infrequently listed as an advantage for subscribing. Specific use of cable television as an informational source was related to subscription at only one of four levels. Using television to find out about local events transferred to desire to get CATV, whereas using it to find out about international, state or national events did not. These findings suggest that the most attractive selling points for CATV would be those emphasizing expanded entertainment value and its local access and news potential, rather than expanded nonlocal news (e.g., CNN).

Although the total number of listed advantages were related to the desire to adopt the new technology, no listed disadvantage would prohibit the desire to subscribe, even though over a third of the respondents found the cost of CATV service to be objectionable.

In terms of Kaplan's category system, over three quarters of the sample thought completeness to be the outstanding advantage of subscribing, while over

half considered the unique character of cable to be advantageous.

In summary, although economy of leisure per se appears to have little relationship to whether one decides to subscribe to cable television, economy of media use does have a strong relationship. In particular, the perceived function of media seems to be importnat. It may be that when perceived as leisure, people consider CATV a better leisure form than standard broadcast television.

To further expand our knowledge of the role played by the spreading technology of CATV, one might focus on how social influences impact the adoption process. In addition, instead of concentrating on the initial decision process, it would benefit our understanding of both cable and leisure to examine how the introduction of cable influences not only leisure life patterns, but also how use of it may cause the individual to re-interpret what leisure is.

TABLE 1

CATV Subscription by Media Use

		. . . do you think you'll subscribe?		
		NO	YES	p value
1.	Overall media use:			
	LIGHT	40%	33%	$p < .0.04$
	HEAVY	19%	8%	
2.	Broadcast use:			
	LIGHT	48%	35%	$p > 0.67$
	HEAVY	11%	6%	
3.	Print use:			
	LIGHT	37%	32%	$p < 0.006$
	HEAVY	22%	9%	

TABLE 2

Self-Generated Advantages For Subscribing

Advantage	% Listing
Wider Selection	52%
To Get Movies	21%
Better Programs	19%
Improved Reception	13%
No Commercials	10%
Sports	8%
Educational Programs	5%
Local Programming	4%
News	4%
Cheap Entertainment	4%
Children's Programs	1%
Interactive Uses	1%

FOOTNOTES

1. For a complete discussion of this perspective, see John P. Robinson "Television and Leisure Time: A New Scenario" Journal of Communication, 1981, 31, 1, 120-130.
2. "Nielson Says Cable Penetration Nears 40 Percent" Broadcasting Magazine, September 5, 1983, p. 90.
3. Stuart J. Kaplan, "Cable Television in the Cities: Some Implications for Mass Communication Research" Central States Speech Journal, 1975, 26, 3, 171-177.
4. See, Stuart J. Kaplan, "The Impact of Cable Television Services on the Use of Competing Media" Journal of Broadcasting, 1978, 22, 2, 155-164; Leo W. Jeffres, "Cable TV and Viewer Selectivity" Journalism Quarterly, 1978, 55, 149-154; Rudy Bretz, "Public Access Cable TV: Audiences" Journal of Communication, 1975, 25, 3, 22-32; Alan Wurtzel, "Public Access Cable TV: Programming" Journal of Communication, 1975, 25, 3, 15-21; Robert K. Yin Cable on the Public's Mind (Santa Monica, California: The Rand Corporation, 1972), 4784.
5. See Nielsen, A.C. Television Audience, 1976, (New York, 1977); Burns Roper Trends in Public Attitudes Toward Television and Other Media, 1959-19 (New York: Television Information Office, 1974).
6. See John P. Robinson.
7. Stuart J. Kaplan, 1978.
8. For an early overview of this approach, consult J.G. Blumler and Elihu Katz, The Uses of Mass Communication: Current Perspectives in Gratification Research (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1974).

9. Lee B. Becker, "Measurement of Gratifications," Communication Research, 1979, 6, 72. Allen Lichtenstein and Lawrence B. Rosenfeld in "Uses and Misuses of Gratifications Research: An Explication of Media Functions," Communication Research, 1983, 10, 1, 97-107, argue that the common use of gratification across mediums may be a function of the media's shared images rather than internal needs. Although we expect that such a distinction may have explanatory power, the point is clear that uses and gratifications for standard broadcast television should transfer to CATV regardless if they are conceptualized as internal states.

10. The system plan was to have a 54 channel design divided into two tiers. The first tier would consist of 27 basic service channels, including an all news channel (CNN), a local access channel, and a university channel. The second tier, would consist of all remaining channels and would feature children's programming, an all-sports, plus the option of subscribing to any or all of five different pay services, including HBO.

11. See Everett M. Rogers. Communication of Innovations (3rd ed.), (New York: Free Press, 1982).

12. Stuart J. Kaplan, 1978, 159.

13. This is within the same broadcast area market as the 1978 study done by Kaplan. Each caller was given three numbers. If the callers received a "busy" they called later. If they received a no answer, disconnect, or refusal they called the next number.